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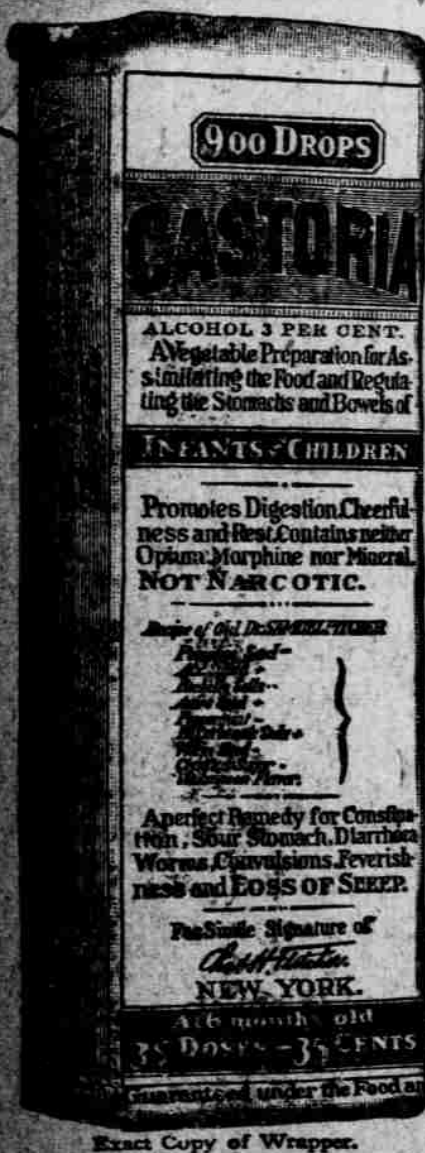
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## The Man From Brodney's

By GEORGE BARR M'CUTCHEON

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Continued.

"Neenah! gasped Geneva, with a startled look. Neenah looked intently into the unsteady, blue gray eyes and then bent over to kiss the hand of the princess. The latter laughed almost aloud in her confusion. She caught herself up quickly and said with some asperity: 'You foolish child, I am to become a prince's wife. How can I love your sister? What nonsense! I am to marry a prince, and he is not to pay for me in rubies.'

"Ah, how wonderful!" cried Neenah, with ravishing candor. "A prince for a husband and the glorious Sahib

"No, excellency. The bars have sprung. I cannot drop them in place. As you know, the lock has been blown away. The charge sprung the bolts. We must go at once."

"Then there is no way to keep them out of the chateau?" cried Geneva anxiously.

"They can go no farther than this room," explained Selim. "We lock the double iron doors from the other side—the door through which you came, most glorious excellency—and they cannot enter the cellars above. This is the chamber which opens into the underground passage to the coast. The passage was made for escape from the chateau in case of trouble and was known to but few. My father was the servant of Sahib Wyckholme, and I used to live in the chateau."

"Once there was a boat, a launch, which lay hidden below the cliffs on the north coast. The passage led to this boat. It was always ready to put out to sea. But one night it was destroyed by the great rocks which fell from the cliffs in an earthquake. When I came here I at once thought of the passage. You will see that the doors into the cellar cannot be opened from this chamber. The locks and bolts are on the other side. I knew where the keys were hidden. It was easy to unlock the doors and come into this room. I found that some one had been here before me. The door to the passage had been forced open from without, cracked by dynamite. Many of the treasure boxes have been removed. Von Blitz was here not an hour ago. He wears boots. I saw the footprints among the naked ones in the passage. They will come back for the other chests. Then they will blow up the passageway with powder, and escape from the chateau through it will be cut off. I have found the keys of powder in the passage and have destroyed the fuses. It will be of no avail, Sahib. They will blow it up at the other end, which will be just the same."

"There's no time to be lost," cried Chase. "We must bring enough men down here to capture them when they return—shoot 'em if necessary. Come on! We can surprise them if we hurry."

They were starting across the chamber toward the door when a gruff, sepulchral oath came rolling up to the chamber through the secret passage. Quick as a flash Selim, who realized that they could not reach and open the door leading to the stairs, turned in among the huge wine casks, first blinding his lantern. He whispered for the others to follow. In a moment they were squeezing themselves through the narrow spaces between the dark, strong smelling casks, back into a darkness so opaque that it seemed lifeless.

"They won't suspect that we are here," whispered Selim as the door to the passage creaked. "Keep quiet! Don't breathe!"

The single electric light was still burning as Selim had found it when he first came. The door swung open slowly, heavily, and Jacob von Blitz, mud covered, reeking with perspiration and panting savagely, stepped into the light. Behind him came a man with a lantern and behind him two others.

They were white men, all. Von Blitz turned suddenly and cursed the man with the lantern. The fellow was ready to drop with exhaustion. Evidently it had been no easy task to remove the chests.

### CHAPTER XXII.

#### SEVERAL PHILOSOPHERS.

THE four burly men sat down upon the chests, Von Blitz alone being visible to the watchers. They were fagged to the last extreme.

"Dis is der last," panted Von Blitz, blowing hard and stretching his big arms. "I fix him," he growled. "His time will come, by tam! I let him know he can't take my vives away nit more. Der dog! I fix him some day purdy soon. Und dem tam vimmen! Dey run away mit him, eh? Ach, Gott, I could only put my hands by der necks yet!"

"Vat for you fret, Jacob?" growled one of the Boers. "You couldn't take dose vimmen back by Europe mit you. I tink you got goot luck by losing dem. Milder Chase can't take dem back needer. Don't fret."

"Vell," said Von Blitz, arising, "come on, boys. Dis is der last of dem. Den we blow der tam 'tling up. Grab hold dere, Joost. Up mit it, Jan. Vat? No?"

"Gott in himmel, Jacob, wait a minutes! My back is broke!" protested Joost stubbornly. Von Blitz swore steadily for a minute, but could not move the impassive Boers.

"Vat for you tink I vant you in on dis, you svine? To set around dis dream? Nobody else knows about dis treasures, und we got it all for ourselves—we four und no more, und you say, 'Vat's der hurry?' It's all ours. Ve divide it oop in der cave mit all der money we get from der bank. Vat? Yes? Den, ven der time comes, ve send it all by Australia und no von is der viser. Der natives von't know, und der white peebles von't be alive to care about it."

"I don't like dot scheme to rob der bank," growled Jan. "If der peeples get on to us, dey would cut us to bieces."

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"But dey von't get on to us, you fool. Dey wouldn't take it themselves if it was handed to dem. Dey're too honest—yes. Vell, don't dey say ve're honest too? Vell, vat more you want? Dey don't know how much money und rubles dere is in der bank. Ve von't take all of it—und dey von't know der difference. Ve burn der books. Das is all. Ve get in by der bank tonight, boys."

"I don't like id," said Joost. "Id's stealing from our freunds, Jacob. Besides, if der oder heils should go before der government mit der story, vat den?"

"Der oder heils vill never get der chance, boys. Dey vill die mit der plague—ha, ha! Sure! Dere von't be no oder heils. Rasula says it must be so. Ve can't wait, boys. It vill be years before der business is settled. Ve must get vat ve can now and wait for der decision afterwards. Brodney has wrote to Rasula, saying dat dot Chase feller is to stay here vedder ve vant him or not. He says Chase is a goot man! By tam, he makes me cry to tink of vot he has done by me—dot goot man!"

To the amazement of all the burly German began to blubber.

"Come on, Jacob," said Jan gruffly. "Von Blitz shook his fist at the door across the chamber and thundered his final maledictions."

"Sir John says in der letter to Milder Chase dere is a movements on foot in London to settle der contest out of court," volunteered Joost.

"Sure, but he also say dat ve all may die mit old age before it is over yet."

"Don't forget der plague!" said Jan. They groaned mightily as they lifted the heavy chests to their shoulders and started for the door.

"Close der door, Jan," commanded Von Blitz from the passage. "Ve vill light der fuse ven ve haf got beyond der first bend. Vat? Look! By tam, von of you svine has broke der fuse. Vait! Ve vill fix him now."

The door was closed behind them, but the listeners could hear them repairing the damage that Selim had done to the fuse.

Led by Selim, the four made a rush for the door leading into the chateau. They threw it open and passed through, flying as if for their lives. No one could tell how soon an explosion might bring disaster to the region; they put distance between them and the powder keg. Selim paused long enough to drop the bolts and turn the great key with the lever. At the second turn in the narrow corridor he overtook Chase and the scurrying women.

"Is there nothing to be done?" cried the princess. "Can we not prevent the explosion? They will cut off our means of escape that!"

"I know too much about gunpowder, princess," said Chase dryly, "to fool with it. It's like a mule. It kicks hard. Gad, it was hard to stand there and hear those brutes planning it all and not be able to stop them!"

The princess was once more at his side. He had clasped her arm to lead her securely in the wake of Neenah's electric lantern. She came to a sudden stop.

"And pray, Mr. Chase," she said sharply, as if the thought occurred to her for the first time, "why didn't you stop them? You had the advantage. You and Selim could have surprised them—they could have taken them without a struggle."

He laughed softly, deprecatingly, not a little impressed by the justice of her criticism.

"No doubt you consider me a coward," he said ruefully.

"You know that I do not," she protested. "I—I can't understand your motive; that is all."

"You forget that I am the representative of these very men. I am a trusted agent of Sir John Brodney, who has refused to supplant me with another. I can't very well represent Sir John and at the same time make prisoners or corpses of his clients, even though I am being shielded by their legal fees. I'll not have Von Blitz saying, even to himself, that I have not only stolen his wives, but have also cast him into the hands of his Philistines. It may sound quixotic to you, but I think that Lord Deppingham and Sir Browne will understand my attitude."

"But Von Blitz has sworn to kill you," she expostulated, with some heat. "You are wasting your integrity. I must say, Mr. Chase."

"Would you have me shoot him from ambush?" he demanded.

"Not at all. You could have taken him captive and held him safe until the time comes for you to leave the island."

(To be Continued.)

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